AWSM Aims & Principles

1: The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement is an organisation working towards a classless, stateless society: anarchist-communism. We are made up of revolutionary class-struggle anarchists from across Aotearoa / New Zealand.

2: Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability, age etc, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3: We believe that fighting all forms of oppression and exploitation is necessary. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, oppressed groups may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people only, as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for those in the oppressed groups. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4: We support Tino Rangatiratanga and stand in solidarity with grassroots indigenous struggle and direct action, while not supporting Māori capitalism and corporatisation (we acknowledge the lack of anarchist theory on the indigenous struggle in Aotearoa / New Zealand and are in the process of researching, debating and discussing a more detailed position on this point).

5: While trade unions can never be revolutionary, we recognise that the majority of collective workplace struggle today occurs within unions and therefore our members should join unions where they exist in their workplace, while being wary of any attempts by union bureauracrats to stifle rank and file struggle. Where unions do not exist we encourage our members to engage with their fellow workers to initiate collective action.

6: We recognise that the general strike is one of the working class' most powerful weapons and oppose all restrictions on worker's rights to take collective action, including strikes.

7: As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people worldwide, Capitalism threatens the planet through war and the destruction of the environment.

8: It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without their use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

9: We acknowledge that by implementing the organisation section of the The Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists - theoretical unity, tactical unity, collective responsibility and federalism - we will be best able to move forward in promoting the aims and principles of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement.

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SOLIDARITY

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Newssheet of the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement

Not our crisis! Resist attacks on workers

The current economic crisis has been and will continue to be used as a chance for the bosses and the government to launch attacks on wages and working conditions.

Already, the National Government has introduced legislation (such as the 90 Day Hire & Fire Act, see inside for more) that attacks our workplace conditions, and as the recession digs in further we can expect them to bring in more new laws that try to stop us from working together to improve our wages, conditions and everyday lives.

Meanwhile, across the country redundancies (both "voluntary" and forced) are being used, both to get rid of staff and as a way of bullying workers into accepting below inflation pay rises (or worse!) Farmers department store workers were recently offered a minuscule 20 cent rise, and this sort of offer is becoming more and more common.

Some unionised worksites have stood up to this and refused to accept sub-par offers: in recent times bus drivers in Hamilton and Wellington have



both experienced lock-outs (where employers refuse to let staff back to work until they give up their demands) but they both stood staunch and received improved offers.

Meanwhile, unemployment is predicted to double to 7% this year, and remain at 7 - 7.5% until 2011. Higher unemployment always means lower wages, as bosses find it easier to replace staff that demand "too much". Unemployment benefits are still set at the same low levels they were reduced to in the early 1990s, meaning that especially in the larger cities (and even more so for people with families) a firing makes it near-impossible to survive without additional assistance from charities such as food banks.

For more info:

A brief history of the crisis
http://libcom.org/library/brief-history-crisis

Analysis and news
http://libcom.org/tags/credit-crisis

Of course, all this puts pressure on workers with mortgages, and as the housing market collapses, people are finding themselves with mortgages they can't afford to pay on houses they can't sell. While the problem hasn't here yet reached the levels seen in the USA, there is no telling how bad it might get.

But its not all bad news - collective action can win and has won. Recently, workers at Republic Windows and Doors in the USA occupied their workplace when it shut down, and won payouts and more! In Northern Ireland, a factory was occupied by workers who won improved redundancy packages. If we talk to our workmates and support each other in hard times, together we can ensure that we aren't made to pay for the bosses' crisis.

Special Feature - Water

Water meters for Wellington?

Recent weeks have seen an increase in discussion about water metering in Wellington, fuelled by Mayor Kerry Prendergast and Chair of the Greater Wellington Regional Council Fran Wilde. They, and others, are attempting to use environmental and conservation concerns as a way to push through compulsory metering without opposition, but several groups have seen through their charade and are campaigning against the introduction of water meters.

The Wellington Residents' Coalition is currently having monthly meetings, stalls and planning sessions to organise against this attack on Wellington's poorest. AWSM is working within the Coalition on this.



Currently, residential water in Wellington is paid for by a portion of rates - in other words, the more expensive your house, the more you pay towards the city's water bill. Water meters would see the cost of providing water fall disproportionately on those who can least afford it. While there are measures that can be taken to lower household water usage (such as rainwater tanks and greywater systems), their cost is often out of reach for many families, and of course renters and council tenants have no real ability to install them.

The Council is quite happy to let Wellington's single largest water user, Taylor Preston Limited in Ngaraunga Gorge, receive a hefty subsidy for their water bill, showing well and truly where their priorities lie - with business and the rich, not ordinary Wellingtonians.

If you are interested in finding out more or getting involved in the campaign, visit http://www.righttowater.org.nz/ or contact AWSM.

Profile: Auckland Water Pressure Group

The battle against commercialised water services and user charges has been going for over a decade in Auckland City, and there is a lot we can learn from that campaign.

In 1997 the Auckland City Council commercialised water services and Metrowater Ltd was established. Metrowater removed the water pipe to a house belonging to a person who refused to pay them for water, which was until then a council run public service. This triggered the formation of the Water Pressure Group, made up of people also boycotting their wastewater bills and later both water and wastewater bills and determined to abolish Metrowater Ltd and return water services to democratic Council control.

On 25 November 1998, the Water Pressure Group's Turn On Squad dug up the street and reinstalled the water pipe to a disconnected house for the first time. Over the next few years hundreds of homes had their water cut off and many needed their pipes reconnected. For three years the WPG was a very effective fully democratic group made up of people from very diverse backgrounds with many different practical skills and political views. At its height up to sixty people attended weekly organising meetings where ideas and plans were discussed and voted on by the meetings. Up to 2000 supporters refused to pay their water bills and took part in protest marches, openly digging up streets and installing water pipes, and distributing leaflets across Auckland and holding many public meetings.

Despite enormous pressure at times, a succession of city councils – both right-wing and "centre-left" – have betrayed the people's demands and the despised Metrowater still exists despite an on-going bills boycott campaign.



The WPG didn't stop user charges in Auckland but the campaign has played a big part in slowing down the spread of commercialised water services around New Zealand. Also in preparing local citizens for worse to come. Right now, there are imminent plans to entirely restructure Auckland, and an extreme danger exists of water services being commercialised across the region, or even prepared for privatisation, by franchise.

We can learn from the experience of the Water Pressure Group as the Wellington and Christchurch City Councils are trying to commercialise and eventually privatise water services. The most effective way to fight this is with non-hierarchical community groups using mass based direct action.

See http://www.water-pressure-group.org.nz/ for more details.

He wai Māori - Drinking water in Parihaka

Local and national government are currently on a propaganda mission trying to convince us that water is owned by 'all of us' (and not Māori). However, this is simply a charade to firstly bring water under state ownership and at a later stage privatise water distribution and commodify water. The Wellington City Council wants to introduce water meters and soon we could find ourselves in a similar situation as the people of Cochabamba (Mexico) where in 2003 even the rain was privatised.

In Parihaka, the community has already put a water system in place that is operated and owned by the the community. Parihaka is a small village in Taranaki with a huge history. Invaded by 1,500 colonial troops in 1881 after a direct action campaign to stop the confiscation of land, thousands of Māori were arrested and thrown in jail - some for years - without trial. A 2000 acre block, collectively owned by several thousand people, is all that remains under indigenous control and around 25 people, half of them kids, live in the papakainga. No one pays rates to the council and the maintenance of the road into the pa and the electricity supply as well as rubbish removal and recycling are all organised by the community.

In recent years, pipes were laid to a spring a few kilometres up the road. This spring provides the whole village with safe drinking water. A large 2,000,000 litre tank was built into a hill. This water reservoir does not only cater for the village, it stores enough water for drinking, showers and toilets during the Parihaka International Peace Festival in January. The festival lasts three days and around 10,000 people come to listen to music, speakers and participate in discussions on topics such as environmental sustainability, tino rangatiratanga and Parihaka history.

Glossary

he wai Māori - fresh water

commodify - to turn something into a commodity, something that can be bought and sold on the capitalist market

papakainga - village

tino rangatiratanga - can be translated as sovereignty / absolute chieftainship

Say NO to the 90 Day Hire & Fire Act!

Workers in small businesses across the country are soon to be subject to new attacks on their rights at work.

The National Party's 90 Day Hire And Fire Act which comes into effect in late March 2009 means that any worker at a business that employs under 20 workers (over 90% of worksites, over 30% of employed workers) can be fired without reason during the first 90 days of employment. The Council of Trade Unions estimates that approximately 100,000 people fall into this category at any one time.

While workers at larger worksites are currently not affected, the National Party has shown that it will likely seek to extend this law to all workers at some point and there is no doubt that the powerful business lobbies will be heavily pushing for this over the coming years.

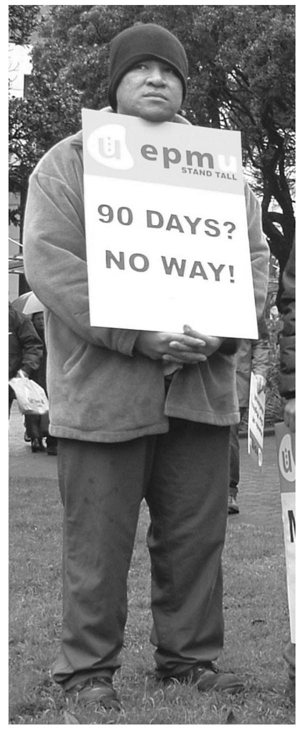
Recent years have seen an increase in casualised labour, temp agencies and the like. The 90 Day Act simply takes these moves one step further in reducing job security. The message from the Government and employers is clear - we should be grateful for the jobs we have, and accept attacks without question or we will be fired.

In reality however, the capitalist system - the very system that organises the economy at the moment - is based on us workers selling our labour to the employers who make huge profits from our time and effort. And now, in times of economic crisis with diminishing profits, it is supposed to be the workers who pay for the bosses' stuff-up!

We can resist attacks by taking collective action with our fellow workers. By linking together (in unions and in other groups) we can better focus our power and fight for better wages and conditions.

The only way to stop the 90 Day Act (and any future extensions of it) is by taking direct action, standing up with our workmates and supporting any and all victims of this new law. Employers that attempt to use this legislation must be targeted with pickets, slowdowns, work-to-rule and other forms of collective action in order to teach them a lesson - that it is workers who hold the power and when we act together we can and will win!

AWSM will stand alongside unions and other groups fighting against the 90 Day Act - get involved today!



Left - An EPMU member at a protest at Parliament against a previous attempt to pass 90 day legislation in 2006